

Furthermore, he has been the ringleader of opposition for immigration reform.

How can we in good faith recommend, nominate, or confirm this person to the post that is solely responsible for protecting the civil liberties of all Americans—including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, and discriminated against.

This administration is continually asking us to put aside our intellect and to trust their intention. I refuse.

This administration would like us to support a man who throughout his career has determined the rights of those who look like me and the constituents I serve are inferior. I refuse.

This administration would like us to sit idly by as Donald Trump tries to overwhelm us into tacit submission to his dangerous agenda. I refuse.

A Trump-Sessions Department of Justice would be not only an attack on our civil rights and equality; it would be an insult to the intelligence of the American people.

Mr. VEASEY. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MCEACHIN).

Mr. MCEACHIN. I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for organizing this hour today.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today because I believe that confirming JEFF SESSIONS as Attorney General for the United States would jeopardize the progress we have made for equal rights and against discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, it is an affront to common sense to confirm someone who has criticized the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and believes that this landmark law, which provides all Americans with the right to cast a ballot for candidates in our democratic process, is intrusive. It is an affront to common sense, Mr. Speaker, to confirm a nominee who views an old advertisement calling for the death penalty of people who are later exonerated as a mark of conservatism.

Mr. Speaker, it is an affront to common sense to confirm someone who was previously rejected as a choice for a Federal judgeship to lead a Department that, in part, vets future Federal judges. It is an affront to common sense, Mr. Speaker, to confirm someone who does not believe in justice for all to lead the Department of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this nominee would not act in the best interest of all Americans, regardless of color, gender, country of origin, sexual orientation, or economic status. Mr. Speaker, it is my fervent hope that the Senate of the United States will deny the confirmation of this nominee.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, President-elect Donald Trump's cabinet nominations are nothing short of alarming. With the United States Senate expected to begin nomination hearings this week, we need to ensure that Congress follows a fair and thorough vetting process as we evaluate the suitability of these individuals to fill the various cabinet positions.

One source of concern is the process by which Republicans in Congress are choosing to conduct these nominations. The recent Republican effort to rush the nominees through the process does not invite confidence in our ability to properly consider each individual on their merits. Walter Shaub, Jr., Director of the Office of Government Ethics, raised his concerns of this very fact given that his office is charged with conducting ethics screening reviews of the nominees. The aggressive hearing schedule to consider these nominees is unprecedented and has placed an undue burden on the Office of Government Ethics (OCE) and its ability to conduct thorough ethics reviews. These ethics reviews are essential to the process and help us to identify potential conflicts of interest or other ethical considerations before we confirm these individuals to serve in public office. Director Shaub has stated that it is unprecedented for the Senate to conduct a confirmation hearing before the ethics review process has concluded. This is simply unacceptable and undermines the democratic process.

The nominees themselves are also cause for concern. Namely, I believe that the nomination of Senator JEFF SESSIONS for Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice threatens the best interests and safety of the American people. Senator SESSIONS has served in the United States Senate for twenty years, during which his record on civil rights and other national issues was questionable at best. For example, he voted several times against the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which aimed to hold offenders of violence against women accountable for their actions. He has also taken a very clear position against rights for the LGBT community, which would deny these Americans basic human rights. His positions on criminal justice and government reforms are also disturbing.

Mr. Speaker, I have serious concerns about the means by which my Republican colleagues are approaching the nomination process this Congress. If we are to properly evaluate the qualifications and the ethical suitability of these nominees, we must conduct an exhaustive examination of each nominee based on their merits—not on their politics. The Republicans are failing to uphold these basic principles through their recent actions. In the name of protecting the American people and doing what is best for our country, I urge my Republican colleagues to return to normal order and delay these nomination hearings until OCE can conclude its ethics reviews of the nominees.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COMER). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities against Members of the Senate and the President-elect.

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 34

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following

standing Committee of the House of Representatives:

(1) Committee on Armed Services—Mr. Smith of Washington.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to clause 11 of rule X, clause 11 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following Members of the House to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

Mr. HIMES, Connecticut
Ms. SEWELL, Alabama
Mr. CARSON, Indiana
Ms. SPEIER, California
Mr. QUIGLEY, Illinois
Mr. SWALWELL, California
Mr. CASTRO, Texas
Mr. HECK, Washington

HOPE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be here tonight at the beginning of this new year. It has been great being in east Texas this weekend, last weekend, hearing all of the hope that has arisen as we have entered this new year, 2017. I think it is going to be a good year.

I am told that just on the basis of a new President coming in who is promising to throttle back, remove so much of the heavy, iron boot off of the throat of the economy that firms are starting to hire again. Businesses are making plans to expand and grow. And then we are seeing reports of plants that are deciding to stay in the United States instead of going elsewhere. There is a lot of optimism out there.

There are young people that are asking what was it like back when you came out of college and had multiple job opportunities for most of the people coming out of college instead of opportunities to live with your parents or your grandparents or a parent or the other parent. They actually had multiple job opportunities, and that optimism has arisen.

As we entered this year, also, it is very sad to see a form of racism and negativity that arises. I have said before publicly, and I think it is still true, we need go back no further than the confirmation hearing for Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. But the more you look, the more you find that the most persecuted person to be in America these days is a conservative African American. If you are Black and you are conservative, you can expect

slings and arrows and hate from all over the country—vicious, mean.

And it was yet another slap, as if the high-tech lynching of the Senate confirmation hearing, as grossly unfair as it was, that woman that withheld any complaints whatsoever, followed a man from job to job, never raised a complaint until he gets ready to be confirmed to the United States Supreme Court, raised allegations that can't possibly be denied or supplemented, verified—not effectively.

□ 2030

You raise them 20-plus years. That is why we have laws on the books to protect from allegations too many years after the fact. We have statutes of limitations.

If you sit on something and don't tell people for years and years, and then all of a sudden, for political reasons, you raise up allegations against someone who is basically defenseless—the thing is Clarence Thomas was not defenseless. There were like 15 people, 15 women, who came forward and said: Look, I was there around Anita Hill when these things were going on. Those things never happened. Clarence Thomas is a brilliant, fine man, over and over.

Does any of that come up when HBO talks about him? Of course not because they were out to slander him, libel him, make him appear to be some crazy guy.

The guy is brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Some say: well, yeah, of course the only way he got into Harvard—which, at the time, was too conservative, he thought, for him, law school after Holy Cross, and then it was too conservative, and he ends up applying to Yale and going there, one he didn't think quite as conservative.

But he began to notice, as he points out in his book, that the liberals would talk to him about sports and oppression of Black people in America, and that is all they wanted to talk about. But he began to notice that two or three other conservatives, the few that there were in Yale at the time, Yale Law School, basically would talk to him about anything, and I have had a conversation, in prior years, with him about that at Yale.

But it is interesting. You know, the liberals say: oh, yeah, we are the ones that care. Now you are only here because we pushed for affirmative action. You couldn't possibly be smart enough to be in a place where I am, the liberals think. So yeah, it is because of us liberals you are here.

No, the guy is brilliant; he deserved to be there on his own merit, on his own intellect. He deserves to be a member of the United States Supreme Court. He deserves the acclaim that he has never properly gotten. But people who have clerked at that Court know the integrity, the intellect, the consistency of Clarence Thomas.

He was maligned. They thought, basically, it was an effort to “Bork,” as it

has come to become, or become a verb, what was done to Justice Bork, accuse him of outrageous offenses, derail his confirmation, so that this conservative, principled, qualified individual doesn't make it to the Supreme Court.

Well, the effort worked on assassinating so grossly unfairly the character of Justice Bork, but it didn't work on Clarence Thomas because he is a man of steadfast faith, integrity, and not just the brilliant intellect.

And it is really heartbreaking. I mean, I thought—even though I didn't support President Obama because I didn't want him taking us down a socialist road, a socialist health care road. He talked about these things. The videos were out there. He wanted to get us to where the government controlled health care, single-payer, in other words, socialized medicine, where the government gets to decide whether you get health care or whether it is any good or not and, of course, it ends up not being, most of the time, once the government has total unfettered control.

I didn't want to go those places he wanted to go, but, I think the good thing is, it shows that America is above racism, and this is a man who can bind up this Nation as never before.

And yet, he has spent right at 8 years now creating more division in this country than we have had since the sixties. And who was stirring it up back then? Well, he was in the middle of groups that were stirring it up back then, protege of Bill Ayers. First fundraiser he had in the home of someone who felt like it was a good idea to kill police, at least try to.

I hear constant allegations that are so unfair. Those who know JEFF SESSIONS make some very fair observations. I noted the great fairness of someone with whom I disagree often, but Senator SUSAN COLLINS.

This article from CNN Politics says: “. . . a moderate Republican elected to the Senate the same year as Sessions in 1996, admits that she and Sessions ‘don't agree on a host of issues,’ but she was happy to accept his”—JEFF SESSIONS—“request to introduce him at his confirmation hearing alongside senior Alabama Sen. RICHARD SHELBY.”

“‘He's a decent, honorable, patriotic individual,’ Collins said in an interview in her Senate office. ‘I felt bad he was not getting a fair shake from those who were denigrating him.’”

“The Maine lawmaker”—SUSAN COLLINS—“is referring to allegations of racial insensitivity—the same Democrats used to block SESSIONS from moving through committee thirty years ago.”

“Collins explained that she is basing her endorsement of SESSIONS' character on her own experience working with him over the past 20 years.”

Well, isn't that a good thing, Mr. Speaker? You have a Senator that says: You know what? I'm not going to listen to the slings and arrows. I'm going to go based on the evidence that

I have seen, heard, and known for myself.

You can denigrate someone all you want, but we are going based on what is real, what is factual; and God bless her for doing so.

“I don't know what happened more than 30 years ago, when JEFF was nominated to be a district court judge, and his nomination failed,” she said. “But I do know the JEFF SESSIONS that I have worked with in the past 20 years. And he is a good person, and I believe that he will perform very well as attorney general.”

“Another Republican colleague who went out of his way to get to know SESSIONS is Sen. TIM SCOTT, the only African-American GOP Senator. In December, SCOTT invited SESSIONS to visit his home state of South Carolina, where the two lawmakers met with criminal justice professionals in Charleston.”

And, you know, I have such great regard for my colleagues across the aisle, but I am heartbroken that 30 years after the denial of JEFF SESSIONS a judicial bench, when the JEFF SESSIONS that I have come to know in the 12 years I have been in Congress—I have come to know him, I feel like, pretty well. He is a good, decent, fair man. He tries to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. He tries to treat people fairly and equally.

I saw this quote from assistant—he was Assistant District Attorney Thomas Harrison, who had started in helping prosecute regarding the lynching of a 19-year-old—just horrific—19-year-old African American, Michael Donald in Alabama. And the Assistant District Attorney Harrison, at the time, who prosecuted the case in State Court, he was quoted as saying: “Sessions asked what we needed”—because Sessions was U.S. Attorney, what they needed, in other words, to go after the culprits that would do such a horrendous criminal act. And he says: “. . . I said, in order to get a capital murder conviction, we need these things, and he”—talking about JEFF SESSIONS—“said that in that regard whatever the federal agents did or the FBI did he would make those things available. He did in fact do that.”

I don't know, that is the kind of JEFF SESSIONS I have gotten to know over the years, and it is a little heartbreaking to hear allegations about a guy. I really like him.

And then to hear allegations that I have heard made about me in a grossly unfair manner. And I can't explain all of the allegations about—that are so grossly unfair about JEFF SESSIONS. But I can address some of the things that have been alleged to make him unfit to be Attorney General that I know are ridiculous.

One of the points that was made was regarding his concern or opposition to the new Voting Rights Act extension, I guess that is what they were talking about, and I know a great deal about that. That comes through the Judiciary Committee, and I know my friend,

fellow Republican, JIM SENSENBRENNER, had reached an agreement with Democrat JOHN CONYERS and others, and they weren't letting amendments get through.

I was trying to make the point clear, if you want to save the Voting Rights Act, you can't keep punishing a State because they did something wrong 50 years ago. That is not constitutional. And if you insist on continuing to put these punitive positions in the Voting Rights Act that will continue to punish southern States that have recorded these days, and it was pretty well true across the South, they had less racial disparity than places in the North, in Wisconsin, in Massachusetts, in California.

Yet, people from these other States, because they made a majority, said: we don't care that they are—there is less racial disparateness in those southern states. There was harm 50 years ago, and there was, and it needed to be cleaned up. It desperately needed to be cleaned up, and we needed a Voting Rights Act in order to help cure the evils.

But what was pushed through in a voting rights extension, with my opposition—and I don't know what JEFF's arguments were, but I know how wrong it was. And I came down here, and my friend—and I mean that—my friend, JOHN CONYERS, was sitting right there, and it was toward the end of the year. And I said: Look, I have talked to liberal law deans from different parts of the country, New York, California, Texas; and when we discuss what you have put in the Voting Rights Act, you are still treating States punitively that are now doing better than California, New York, Massachusetts, at least some districts in those States. Wisconsin had a district with a huge problem.

You can't do that. It is going to be ruled unconstitutional. And I still cannot support it, but why don't we do a joint amendment and fix this?

And my friend, JOHN CONYERS, he is a very honorable man, and he said: Let me talk to some of our folks. And when I talked to him before the end of the year, he said: We think it is okay, and the people I talked to think it is okay. We don't need to amend it. We are going to leave it just like it is.

Well, it is wrong. Whether it is in a Voting Rights Act, whether it is in a criminal bill, a civil bill, if you are punishing people for the sins of their grandfathers or fathers, it is wrong. It is un-American. And I don't know if JEFF SESSIONS has called something like that un-American, but I will.

When you try to punish an individual for something their father or grandfather did, that is un-American. That is wrong.

And lo and behold, the liberal law professors and deans that I have talked to across the country, before I begged—well, I begged JIM SENSENBRENNER. He was sitting at the back right back there.

□ 2045

He said: Nope, we are not touching that bill.

They were happy to let it go to the Supreme Court one day just the way it was. Just as I explained to JOHN CONYERS right here, just as I explained to JIM SENSENBRENNER right back there, this should be struck down if the U.S. Supreme Court is going to be fair and partial and follow the Constitution.

You can't keep punishing people for something their fathers or grandfathers did when they are doing better than people in your own State and you vote to punish them. Why? Because you can. Their fathers or grandfathers committed a wrong many years ago. A grievous wrong it was, and it needed correction. There are some places where it still does, but you don't keep punishing people 50 years after they bring up their problem.

So I hear people say JEFF SESSIONS is not fit because he opposed the Voting Rights Act. I tried to clean it up. It had an un-American provision in there.

I just can't believe anybody on either side of the aisle would continue to support the idea that we should punish children or grandchildren for something their father or grandfather did many years ago. This child has become an adult and they have made sure there is fairness abounding. Well, there is always going to be injustice.

One of the great problems in this Justice Department is that it was always quick to take up for someone who had been shot by policemen—before they knew any of the facts—and demonize the local police. Sometimes—in rare cases, but every now and then—they did deserve demonizing. But the Department of Justice should not demonize them before we find out the facts.

In most of those cases, when we find out the facts, whether it is Baltimore or other places, most of the time people or even a professor of some kind, like the President, said he acted stupidly, talking about the policeman. It turned out the policeman conducted himself very reasonably. We never did hear whether the President apologized to the policeman or not, but the point is that the President and the Justice Department have spent 8 years dividing us in ways I did not believe were possible 8 years ago.

So I hear my friends come in here and start condemning a man as not being fit to serve because of things like opposing an unconstitutional, un-American provision in the Voting Rights Act. It was then, it is today. If somebody tries to pass a punishment of some group of people for something their grandparents did, it is wrong, it is un-American. I will say it to the day I die.

Now, it is very unfair. I saw it as a felony judge. It broke my heart. In chambers, but never in the courtroom itself, it would bring me to tears. I would break down when I saw the suffering of children because of the sins of

their parents. But the government should not be in the business of punishing people intentionally. There was a provision in the Voting Rights Act that did just that.

I also heard an allegation about JEFF SESSIONS either opposing a hate crime extension or hate crime bill. I can tell you from conversations I had years past, back when we were talking about hate crimes bills, we did not need hate crime laws.

What was the fake news that was trotted out here in Washington, trotted out around the country?

Remember what happened down in south Texas?

It wasn't in my district, but I am familiar with what happened down there. There were three White guys that took a poor, decent African American, used a chain, tied him to their truck, and drug him until he was dead. It was in print and publicly.

I would personally have no problem with a jury ordering a sentence, if we could put it in the law, so that the family of that victim could decide what they were going to use to drag the defendants and the terrain they would drag those White defendants over, but that is not the law.

The law in Texas is that our juries can find you guilty and sentence you. Well, the juries don't actually sentence death. That is left to the judge. The juries answer three questions. I know. I have put it to juries three times.

On one occasion the jury came back locked up, so I sentenced that defendant to life. On two occasions of three capital murder cases I tried to completion, the jury found unanimously, number one, he committed the murder and he knew that a murder was going to be committed; number two, that he is a future danger to society; and number three, there was no evidence that mitigated against the imposition of the death penalty.

The jury comes back with yes, yes, and no; and it is left to a judge like me to look a man in the eyes and tell him that I sentence him to death. There is nothing that goes to your soul like looking someone in the eye and saying: You are going to be taken to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and you are going to be put to death for the crimes you have committed.

I believe in the death penalty, but I believe with all my heart you have to make sure due process occurs. I could care less about race.

I hear these allegations about JEFF SESSIONS. I know JEFF and I know this is ridiculous. As I was listening to some of these broad statements just taking a swat at JEFF SESSIONS, a really fine, decent man, it took me right back to 20 years or so ago when I was that felony district judge in Texas and I tried capital murder cases, murder cases. Never mind the fact that I was court-appointed to appeal the capital murder conviction of an African American man and I did everything I possibly could ethically and within the

law for my client, who I believed was wrongly convicted in this case.

His case was overturned after my argument. I was the only one arguing for our side. I was the one that solely did the brief. Even though the family paid thousands of dollars to somebody from another State, I did the whole thing. I did it all. I didn't have a clerk do it. I did it all.

His capital murder conviction was reversed. His mother used to bring me wonderful food. I loved her. I went to her funeral. She was just an incredible Christian woman and her funeral did her justice. Of course, then her daughter ran against me for Congress three times, but that is another story.

Nonetheless, I can remember back when I was a felony judge and I got served with a subpoena by a defense lawyer. They had taken the position in a pleading in another court that, because I had allegedly appointed a disparate number of White people to be grand jury foremen over African Americans, I must be bigoted. Therefore, convictions in Smith County should be overturned. I think they subpoenaed another district judge or two. We had three.

I knew that lawyer. He knew I wasn't a racist. He subpoenaed me and made allegations in print before he even knew who had been on my grand juries during those years I was a felony district judge, but he made the broad-based allegation that I must be racist and we have got to throw out these cases.

Before I came to testify, he actually got the list of my grand jurors. I didn't get to choose the grand jurors. Those were chosen by grand jury commissioners. The commissioners chose the grand jury members. I got to choose the grand jury foremen. I didn't care about race. I didn't care about gender. I appointed people because, when I looked at the background, the little bios we had on each of the grand jury members, I wanted somebody that was going to be a leader on that grand jury. I didn't care about race.

When the criminal defense lawyers did their homework after they made allegations, they notified me that I would not be called as a witness because I appointed too many African American grand jury foremen. Therefore, it was a disparate number of African Americans. It was too many. Therefore, I would hurt their case because I would show that maybe I was more biased for African Americans than against them. I didn't care about race.

I can remember a couple of grand jury foremen. One of them was, I think, an assistant school superintendent. I knew the guy. He was a solid citizen. I had seen him in action. He was a real leader in the community. He was an honest, fair man. I thought he would be great as a grand jury foreman. And he was.

Probably the best grand jury foreman I ever appointed—she was a saint—was

Ms. Glass. I knew enough about her when I saw she was on the grand jury. I knew she would be the foreman. That woman was a saint. She was organized and she called things like they were. You couldn't help but fall in love with Ms. Glass if you were around her for any length of time at all.

Those memories of getting a subpoena alleging that I am a racist until they actually did their homework and found out, oops, he may be too pro-African American, we don't want him to testify, I got that same feeling when I was hearing those allegations against JEFF SESSIONS. It is not based on facts. It is: Oh, we just had the feeling that maybe he was being unfair.

I think somebody mentioned the Southern Poverty Law Center or something. I know that the Southern Poverty Law Center, in my opinion, after they incited hatred against the Family Research Council, incited hatred against other people. The Southern Poverty Law Center was supposed to be the antithesis of hate. Yet, they stirred up a guy so much that he would go into their lobby and try to kill people at the Family Research Council. It is more of this craziness.

The Bible warns of us a day when up will be down, right will be wrong. I keep wondering, Are we there?

We hear from people at the civil rights commission that maybe Christians are the big hate group in the country. Really?

□ 2100

It is the only religion that is truly based on love because to be a Christian, you have to believe God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believed in His Son would not perish but have everlasting life. And then His Son so loved the world that He laid down His life for people, even as they called Him names and mocked Him. It is a religion of love. It is not a religion of hate. Yet, right is wrong, up is down, let's call somebody that wants justice and fairness a racist.

Really, is that fair?

So, supposedly, JEFF SESSIONS—I think this was alleged at him at one point—is not fit to serve as Attorney General because he is for vouchers. Mr. Speaker, when you hear from African Americans here in Washington, D.C., about how their children have suffered under horrendous gang conditions in a school, and then for this Camelot-type moment they got vouchers—they won the lottery—that Republicans pushed for, they got to go to great schools. These kids that had been oppressed and shoved in either being in gangs or dealing with gangs, they got to go get a good education because they got a voucher.

When you have an African American mom cry before you and say: My other kids, are they going to have to go face the gangs? Why can't they go be a doctor or an engineer?

I don't think it is hate. I don't think it is prejudice that has your heart ache

for a mom like that and says: Yeah, yeah, why don't we give moms and dads or whoever is taking care of the kids money.

You go to the school. It is not an indictment of public schools. We didn't have kindergarten. All 12 years of mine were in public schools. I had fantastic teachers, incredible, inspiring.

I was going to major in history at A&M on an Army scholarship, so it didn't matter much what I majored in. I knew I was going in the Army for 4 years. I hoped to go to law school some day if we weren't at war. But my math teachers in public schools—7th grade, Ms. Edwards. In high school I had fantastic math teachers. Although some students didn't like them, I loved them. They were great.

College algebra, we had a professor who let us either turn in our homework that we had to do for every—it was a Monday, Wednesday, Friday class—turn in the homework or he would give you one question at the beginning of each class. If you didn't want to do the homework, you had to take that one question. If you answered it wrong, you got a zero for the day. I didn't open my book until 15 minutes before the final and never did the homework because my 7th grade teacher, Ms. Edwards, and all my math teachers in high school were so good. I had the foundation. It was there. Of course, I enjoyed math, but I made an A. It was easy because of the public school training I got, but not every public school has that advantage.

I had the advantage of having an 8th grade English teacher for a mother, and she was in public school until the brain tumor took her. That is a burden. You come home after football practice: "I am going to go lay down. I am exhausted, Mom."

"Oh, what are you going to lay when you get there?"

"Okay. All right. I am going to lie down. Are you happy? Just cut me some slack. I am going to go lie down."

Well, that is living with a public schoolteacher. I miss her and love her.

But because I think—or if JEFF SESSIONS feels the same way—I think he may—heck, if schools are not teaching children to read and write so they can excel and become president of their company or President of the country, then let them go to a school. I think public schools will end up winning out. They have got the wherewithal to have the best schools. They just don't have any incentives. That was the purpose of vouchers, to provide incentive.

I have heard the allegation that Trump, you know, was a birther. I haven't had a lot of conversations with Trump. I have had a number of them. But my impression was that he never said that—maybe he did, I just didn't hear him say Obama was not born in America. But I know I have heard people say repeatedly that, I, LOUIE GOHMERT, am a birther. Which is a lie. I have never, ever, ever said that. Yet, it became such a credo of the left, some

guy on FOX News one night—I think he was on Megyn Kelly, a Democratic consultant. She says, Tell me somebody that hates—Well, LOUIE GOHMERT is a birther, he said. And if I recall correctly—I am pretty sure I do—he later wrote an article: Okay, okay, Gohmert never actually said that Barack Obama was not an American citizen, but he did support the birther bill, therefore, he is a birther.

Well, that takes me back to August—I guess it was July of 2009; I believe it was—and my friend BILL POSEY from Florida had a little 2-page bill. It may have been 2 and just a hair at the top of the third page. I think it was a little bit at the top of the third page, just over 2 pages. And it was a good bill. I read the bill. I try to do that before I will ever agree to support a bill. And I read the bill.

I recall that The New York Times and The Washington Post, I think around January of 2008, raised the issue of whether or not JOHN MCCAIN was qualified under the Constitution to be President of the United States because, apparently, he was born in the Panama Canal Zone.

Gee, is that being a natural citizen, born in the Canal Zone?

His dad was in the Navy, military. So, yeah, maybe so. The New York Times and The Washington Post raised the issue.

I was in Israel during August when I got word that I was being accused of being a birther. I can recall out here in the Speaker's lobby a whole slew of reporters wanting to know about my being a birther. One of them, at the time, was with The Washington Post. I knew she was a good reporter. That is why she is not there now. I couldn't believe it. It was kind of: Et tu, Brute? Really, you think I am a birther?

Well, I understand from the White House that you signed on the bill, and, if I recall the words correctly, it was to delegitimize the President and have him thrown out of office.

I said, wow. I think those were the words. It was something like that, but it was exactly the words that every reporter who approached me was using: You are trying to delegitimize the President and have him thrown out of office?

I think Doonesbury used words like that.

So when, privately, this one reporter caught me in another place and said: I understand you are a birther; you are on the birther bill?

I said: Are you talking about BILL POSEY's bill?

She said: Yeah, the birther bill.

I said: Have you read it?

She said: Well, no, but I know it is trying to delegitimize the President and have him thrown out of office.

I said: Tell you what, I haven't been giving statements to these ridiculous allegations. I think I gave a written one I dictated from Israel, but when I was here, it was just absurd.

I said: I tell you what, you read the Posey bill. It is just barely over 2

pages. You read that bill, and if you still want a statement from me, I will give you as long a statement as you want.

The next time I saw her, I said: Did you read the Posey bill?

She said: Yeah. It didn't do anything they said it was going to do.

Exactly. It was a very well-conceived bill. It was not a birther bill. But in the mind of Rahm Emanuel, he saw it as an opportunity to allege that someone was racist, a birther, accusing the President of not being an American citizen. Because my thought was: Well, if he is born to an American mother, what difference does it make? Is it really—

But I do still find it interesting that the President wouldn't come forward, as anybody else in America would, and say: Here is my birth certificate.

It took Donald Trump making a demand for him to finally come forward. Who knows if that is the right one or not. But I never had any issue with Barack Obama being an American citizen. I didn't have any question. I do think he should have come forward and shut down the noise much sooner, but I think he and Rahm Emanuel liked using that and liked to call people like me a birther even though it was an absolute lie. I never believed the President was not an American citizen.

Yes, I signed on to that BILL POSEY bill. What BILL POSEY's bill has been for, what, 11 years now—well, no, I am sorry, 8 years now it has been called a birther bill. All it did—anybody can go read POSEY's bill from back in 2009—it said, before a candidate for his or her party's nomination, or pursues his or her party's nomination for President, the party must make a determination that that individual meets the qualifications of the Constitution. And it would not kick in until 2012.

So the crud these reporters were getting from somebody in the White House—maybe Rahm Emanuel. Who knows? It sounded like Rahm. But whoever sent them the information, whoever sent Garry Trudeau the false lies that he used for a strip never bothered to read the bill and see that the allegations of birtherism—whatever that is—was just a lie. It said beginning in 2012. Nobody was trying to get anybody thrown out of office, but that made perfect sense. So the next time The Washington Post and The New York Times raised an issue of whether or not somebody like JOHN MCCAIN was really qualified to be President, you would get it resolved long before that person got elected President.

I couldn't imagine a worse horror for America than to have someone elected President and then get thrown out after they are elected. We are talking about massive riots. We are talking about destroying this country, just dividing it even worse than this administration has been able to do on its own. I didn't want to yank a President out of office, but I thought BILL POSEY thought of a very fair way to deal with it.

By the way, those who were concerned about my friend TED CRUZ being appropriate to be President, meeting the constitutional requirements, I thought, well, gosh, if the left hadn't so demonized BILL POSEY's bill, he had the framework that would get this all out of the way long before you ever got to a party nomination so that the party had it all resolved, and you couldn't come in at the last minute after the nomination, saying: Nope, you didn't go to the—it would take care of it.

I had a Supreme Court Justice say years ago: Gee, if there is no legislation that sets up a foundation or an enabling process, then don't come running to the Supreme Court. If you are not going to do your job and set it up or have enabling legislation come out of Congress, don't come running to us to fix what you are not doing.

□ 2115

And he wasn't talking about anything specific, but I thought about those comments. Well, great, the Posey bill would be terrific enabling legislation. And if the White House wasn't so freaked out over BILL POSEY's legitimate bill, the Ted Cruz issue would not have been an issue at all. It would have been long determined long before we got into a heated race in the primary, because before a party chair could accept the application to become a candidate, it had to determine whether or not that candidate met the constitutional requirements. And if somebody wanted to challenge, then they would need to come forward and do it at that point, and you get it all worked out. It was a good bill.

But poor BILL POSEY has been so vilified for coming up with a good idea that was branded as a racist birther. It was a really legitimate bill. And I keep coming back to this. It reminds me of what I am hearing being said about JEFF SESSIONS—a very decent man.

I don't try to push my religious beliefs on others, but it is a part of who I am as a Christian. I try to forgive others, and I have been amazed by the grace of God how I have been able to forgive people who have really jerked me around and even work with people that have really stabbed me in the back before. But I have been amazed.

JEFF SESSIONS was called all kinds of things in 1986, yet 10 years later he is elected to the Senate. He never sought any kind of revenge against those who did him so unfairly and unjustly because he cared about justice and doing the right thing.

This country needs to heal. If people are going to keep screaming racism when it appears the biggest source of racism may have been all those people who told me, well, I wanted to vote for the first Black American in our history and I really didn't know much about politics, you mean you voted for someone because of the color of their skin? Yes, I wanted to be able to tell future generations I voted for the first Black President.

I wanted to do that, too. That is why I voted for Alan Keyes in 1996. Sorry, Phil Gramm; I know you are from my State, but I just really thought a lot of the intellect and integrity of Alan Keyes, and I still do. That is why his son works for me. He is brilliant, fair, smart, and pretty doggone funny too.

But I don't care about race, and we need to quit throwing this "racist" term about. Enough already. Let's give JEFF SESSIONS a fair hearing. Let's look at what his record really is. And if he, like I did, opposed an unconstitutional punishment of a future generation who had done no wrong for something grandparents had done, then he is right. That is unconstitutional. It is un-American. I am grateful that Donald Trump has nominated a man like JEFF SESSIONS for the Senate. God bless JEFF SESSIONS.

I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE BILL APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT PRIOR TO SINE DIE ADJOURNMENT

The President, prior to sine die adjournment of the Second Session of the

114th Congress, notified the Clerk of the House that on the following date, he had approved and signed a bill of the Senate of the following title:

December 23, 2016:

S. 2943. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

SENATE BILL APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT AFTER SINE DIE ADJOURNMENT

The President, after sine die adjournment of the Second Session, 114th Congress, notified The Clerk of the House that on the following date, he had approved and signed a bill of the following title:

January 6, 2017:

S. 3084. An act to invest in innovation through research and development, and to improve the competitiveness of the United States.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. PERRY (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of illness.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. CORREA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of attending a funeral.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and January 10 on account of district issues and events.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 19 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, January 10, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXPENDITURE REPORTS CONCERNING OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL

Reports concerning the foreign currencies and U.S. dollars utilized for Official Foreign Travel during the third and fourth quarters of 2016, pursuant to Public Law 95-384, are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, DANIEL SILVERBERG, EXPENDED BETWEEN OCT. 25 AND OCT. 28, 2016

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Daniel Silverberg	10/26	10/28	Poland		468.04		14,295.26				14,763.30
Committee total					468.04		14,295.26				14,763.30

¹ Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.

² If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

DANIEL SILVERBERG, Nov. 20, 2016.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, DANIEL SILVERBERG, EXPENDED BETWEEN DEC. 11 AND DEC. 16, 2016

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Daniel Silverberg	12/12	12/15	India		1,133.00		13,217.00				14,350.00
Committee total					1,133.00		13,217.00				14,350.00

¹ Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.

² If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

DANIEL SILVERBERG, Dec. 22, 2016.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN JULY 1 AND SEPT. 30, 2016

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem ¹		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency ²
Hon. John J. Duncan	7/29	7/31	Spain		507.15		18.79		36.43		562.37
	7/31	8/4	Italy		1,799.49		1,614.15		290.49		3,704.13
	8/4	8/7	Ireland		1,489.47		659.59		555.78		2,704.84
Hon. Daniel Lipinski	8/20	8/22	Israel		1,036.00						1,036.00
	8/22	8/24	Poland		535.87						535.87
	8/24	8/24	Latvia								0.00
	8/24	8/25	Germany		269.15						269.15
	8/25	8/29	Italy		914.52		1,780.96				2,695.48